

Section 4 Initial Accreditation Policies

This section governs the initial accreditation of institutions ~~and programs.~~

A. Responsibility for Two Types of Initial Accreditation

- 1. Initial Accreditation of Institutions/*Program Sponsors.*** A postsecondary education institution that has not previously been declared eligible to offer credential preparation programs must submit an application to the Commission for initial professional accreditation. Institutional accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) *or another of the six regional accrediting bodies or evidence of the entity's governance board's approval or sponsorship of the program* is required for initial professional accreditation by the Commission. The Commission may establish additional procedures and criteria for the initial professional accreditation of institutions to prepare and recommend candidates for state credentials in education.
- 2. Initial Accreditation of Programs.** New credential program proposals by institutions that have been determined to be eligible by the Commission must fulfill preconditions established by state law and the Commission, the Common Standards, and a set of Program Standards. Descriptions of new programs include evidence of involvement in program design and planning by elementary and secondary school practitioners and members of diverse local communities. The Committee on Accreditation decides the initial accreditation of new credential programs at an eligible institution/*sponsor*.

B. Policies for Initial Accreditation of Programs

- 1. Review of New Programs.** Prior to being presented to the Committee for action, new programs proposed by eligible program sponsors are reviewed in relation to the Common Standards in Appendix 2 and the selected Program Standards as specified in Section 3 of this *Framework*. The Committee considers recommendations by the staff and the external reviewers regarding the accreditation of each proposed program.

2. **Institutional Standards.** An institution/*program sponsor* that selects National or Professional Program Standards (Option 2) or *utilizes* Alternative Program Standards (Option 3) submits the standards to the Committee on Accreditation for initial approval prior to developing a program proposal. The acceptability of the standards is assured before the *sponsor* prepares a program proposal.
3. **Experimental Programs.** The Committee on Accreditation accredits experimental programs by applying standards adopted by the Commission relating to:
 - submission of research questions, hypotheses or objectives related to the selection, preparation or assessment of prospective professional educators;
 - submission of a research design applicable to the research questions, hypotheses or objectives being investigated; and
 - demonstration of the potential effectiveness of the proposed program in generally improving the quality of service authorized by the credential.
4. **Alternative Programs.** The Committee on Accreditation accredits alternative programs by applying standards adopted by the Commission relating to:
 - the overall quality of alternative standards developed by the institution, which must have educational merit generally equivalent or superior to standards set by the Commission as Option 1;
 - the requirement that extended alternative programs adhere to standards of professional competence that exceed those set by the Commission for conventional teacher education programs; and
 - a recommendation that alternative programs that lead to Multiple or Single Subject Teaching credentials be designed to integrate the delivery of subject matter preparation and pedagogical preparation over the entire period of each candidate's initial preparation as a teacher.

Section 5
Initial and Continuing Accreditation Reviewers

This section governs the *initial and continuing accreditation reviews of institutions* in California.

A. Board of Institutional Reviewers

~~Pool of Trained Reviewers.~~ To conduct reviews for the *initial and continuing accreditation of educator preparation institutions/institutions/program sponsors*, the Executive Director of the Commission maintains a pool of trained reviewers consisting of California college and university faculty members and administrators, elementary and secondary school teachers and other certificated professionals, and local school board members, pursuant to Education Code Section 44374(b). The pool consists of approximately ~~400~~ 200 persons who are geographically and culturally diverse, and who represent gender equity. The Committee on Accreditation establishes criteria for membership in the pool. The Executive Director adds new members to the pool from time to time.

New Reviewers. For the most part, an accreditation team consists of experienced reviewers. A team need not include an inexperienced member, but new reviewers are appointed to *review activities* after their training, when appropriate.

Conflict of Interest. Care is exercised to avoid conflicts of interest involving accreditation team members and the institution/*sponsor* being reviewed. No member of a team shall have ties to the institution/*sponsor*, such as current or past enrollment there, programmatic collaboration, past or present employment, or spousal connections.

B. Team Structure, Size and Expertise.

- 1. Initial Program Approval:** New programs may be reviewed by Commission staff members who have expertise in the credential area. If the Commission staff does not possess the necessary expertise, the program proposals may be reviewed by external experts selected by the Executive Director. *New programs are reviewed by one to two reviewers.*

- 2. Continuing Program Accreditation Review:** *For each program being considered for continuing accreditation, the Executive Director appoints a program review team. Programs may be reviewed in groups of like programs, (clusters) and cluster members are responsible for reviewing a group of credential programs from the same program sponsor. The team will prepare a report to the COA containing its findings on standards and accreditation recommendations. The size of clusters ranges from two to five members, depending on the number of programs being reviewed. Team members with appropriate experience and qualifications are responsible for professional judgments about credential programs. Reviewers assigned to a cluster should have sufficient expertise to make sound judgments about programs in the cluster.*
- 3. Continuing Institutional Accreditation:** *For an institution/sponsor being considered for continuing accreditation, the Executive Director appoints a site accreditation team and designates a team leader. The accreditation team members have responsibility for reviewing the Common Standards and either confirming or altering the findings from the program reviews. The size of the site review team ranges from three to seven members, depending on the enrollment, complexity of programs, and satellite locations. One to two members will have primary responsibility for the program findings. Additional members of the site accreditation team may be added by the COA as a result of its review of the sponsor's programs.*
- 4. Team Expertise.** The range of credential programs at an institution/sponsor must be reflected in the expertise of the reviewers, but there need not be a one-to-one correspondence between credential programs and reviewer specializations. *Student enrollments in programs, the complexity of programs, and/or the numbers of specialized programs offered by an institution will all be considered when both program and site teams are created¹. The nature of the preliminary findings will also be considered in establishing the site team.* At least one member of each institution's site team has a depth of expertise in the multicultural, diversity and language acquisition needs of California classrooms.

¹ Student enrollment is a factor because the team must complete a sufficient sample of interviews in order to make valid, reliable judgments about issues of quality. Complexity may be a factor if an institution

operates diverse programs, or if programs are offered at geographically dispersed locations or in colleges outside the education unit.

B. Organization and Expertise of Continuing Accreditation Activities

- 1. Coordination and Communication between the Program Review and the Site Review Teams.* Clear and timely communication from the program review teams to the Committee on Accreditation and from the Committee on Accreditation to the sponsor and site team is essential.
- 2. Team Leader.** The Executive Director appoints an experienced reviewer as the leader of a *sponsor's site* team for continuing accreditation. The leader's roles are to assist the Commission's staff consultant in planning the review, participate in team size and composition decisions, and provide leadership in team training, orientation and support during the accreditation review. The team leader and the Commission's staff consultant are jointly responsible for management of the review.
- ~~2. Cluster Leaders.~~ The team leader and staff consultant select a member of each cluster to serve as cluster leader, whose role is to help in organizing and managing the cluster's activities during the review.
- ~~3. Site Review Team Common Standards Cluster.~~ The Common Standards are reviewed by a team of reviewers, including members who are able to make judgments about the education unit. This cluster may include *among others*, a dean, associate dean, university unit director (when a smaller institution has a department rather than a school of education) and/or a superintendent of a school district or county office of education.
- ~~4. Team Assignments.~~ Team members are trained in reviewing the Common Standards and/or the selected Program Standards. A single cluster of reviewers is not normally given primary responsibility for reviewing the Common Standards and Program Standards in the same review.

- ~~5. **Team Continuity.** When possible and when appropriate to the programs at one or more institutions to be visited, members of previously successful teams are kept together for the purpose of reviewing more than one institution.~~

C. **Training and Orientation for Accreditation Reviews**

Prior to participation in an accreditation review *activities*, team members, cluster leaders and team leaders participate in two kinds of in-depth training and orientation.

1. **BIR Team Training.** To ensure that accreditation reviews examine issues of quality in preparation, team members participate in an intensive ~~three-day~~ training program, which focuses on *document review*, *data analysis*, team skills, interview techniques, accreditation procedures, and the consistent application of standards. In adopting an *Accreditation Handbook*, the Committee on Accreditation will attend to appropriate differentiation in the training of new and returning team members, cluster leaders and team leaders *and training for the three different types of review activities: Initial Program Approval, Continuing Program Review, and Continuing Institutional Accreditation Review. The Board of Institutional Reviewers will have members involved in all three types of review activities.*
2. **Team Orientation.**

Initial Program Approval: As new program standards are adopted, and documents are then submitted, a Commission staff member will be assigned to the program. The staff member will ensure calibration of reader responses to the standards and work with all reviewers to ensure that all programs documents submitted for initial program approval are reviewed in an equitable manner.

Continuing Program Review: Updates will be provided to BIR members regarding program review on a regular basis. Program Reviewers may meet regionally to review program documents. At such a meeting, a Commission staff consultant will be present.

Continuing Institutional Accreditation Review: On the day prior to the beginning of an accreditation site visit, team members meet to discuss their observations about the institutional self-study report, the *preliminary program standard findings*, review their

prior training as team members, and thoroughly plan the team activities for the accreditation review under the team leader ~~and cluster leaders~~.

3. ***Evaluation of Training and Accreditation Activities.*** *To ensure that future team trainings and orientations are effective, all team members will be asked to review both training and orientation activities. The Committee on Accreditation will analyze the responses and modify the trainings appropriately.*